



U.S. General Services Administration  
Public Buildings Services  
1800 F Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20405  
202.501.3280  
[www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov)



removing  
architectural barriers



# We strive to lead the industry.

A leader in public accessibility in the building industry, the General Services Administration (GSA) has demonstrated the successful implementation of the first public accessibility law, the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) of 1968, which sets standards for all federally funded facilities.

## History

The Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 requires that facilities designed, built, altered, or leased with certain federal funds be accessible to persons with disabilities. The ABA designated GSA, the United States Postal Service, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Department of Defense to be the agencies tasked to create the standards that would implement the ABA.

In the 1970s, GSA's Public Buildings Service (PBS) implemented a voluntary retrofit program, which made most of the owned and long-term leased GSA facilities comply with the minimum ABA standards. The program lasted six years and cost approximately \$27 million. GSA played a major role in formulating the accessibility policy that resulted in the publication of the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS) in August 1984. The UFAS brought all federal agencies under common accessibility standards for the first time, and was the model for the future state/local government and private sector guidelines created after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990.

Since the publication of the UFAS, all new federal facilities and all federal facilities undergoing major space renovations have been required to be fully accessible. In addition, in 1984, GSA issued a policy on accessibility in leased space because no leasing provisions were included in the UFAS.

## Visit our website at [www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov) to learn more about GSA's

## GSA and Accessibility

Since the 1970s, GSA has been at the forefront of removing architectural barriers in our public buildings. PBS manages the National Accessibility Program for GSA, and has demonstrated a continuous commitment to provide accessible facilities. In addition to meeting the requirements of the UFAS, current GSA policy also encourages compliance with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG), where they are more stringent than the UFAS. If local accessibility requirements exist, the Architect/Engineer (A/E) of a GSA project is responsible for following the most stringent of all these requirements.

The Administrator of General Services, or his designee, is a member of the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (the Access Board), an agency of the federal government which oversees compliance of federal agencies with the UFAS. The Administrator has designated the Deputy Administrator as the GSA board member. The National Accessibility Program provides liaison and technical staff support for the Administrator and Deputy Administrator, and responds to accessibility complaints against GSA facilities. The National Accessibility Program also helps to develop accessibility policy and provides UFAS interpretations to other federal agencies, designers, private citizens, and accessibility organizations on a daily basis.

The National Accessibility Officer is GSA's liaison to the Access Board and coordinator for the national program. Each of GSA's 11 regions has appointed a Regional Accessibility Officer to oversee the regional program. These regional officers are notified whenever a complaint is made against a GSA facility in their region. They provide support and guidance so that all complaints are quickly answered and responses are the same for similar problems. They also provide technical advice, in consultation with the national officer, for accessibility issues related to all aspects of the PBS design and construction program.

The number of accessibility complaints at GSA's buildings has dramatically declined in recent years due largely to the hard work and dedication of GSA's regional staff, which is continuously striving to follow the accessibility laws and standards.

## Success through Performance Measures

PBS emphasizes performance measures as an integral part of the periodic performance review process. All associates, design professionals, contractors, project managers and vendors are held accountable in GSA's efforts to assure compliance with accessibility laws and GSA policy. The success of PBS's modernization and new construction projects has served to provide the most effective performance measure.

# National Accessibility Program.